

The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, 1961-69

By noon the soft Cape Breton mist condensed into pelting rain. In one of the Château rooms, a carpenter was showing a visitor how he gouged out the surface of a squared-off timber to make it look like an 18th-century product. Bill McNeil, a CBC radio reporter, moved in to record the craftsman's story.

It was September 8, and the first phase of reconstructing the 18th-century fortress-town of Louisbourg (23 miles south of Sydney, Nova Scotia) was being marked by Northern Affairs Minister Jean Chrétien's ceremonial opening of the Governor's Wing in the Château St. Louis.

The \$12 million project, already representing eight years of work by teams of historians, archaeologists, engineers, and

craftsmen trained in 18th-century construction methods, will reflect, on completion, a slice of early life in Canada. To date over a half dozen buildings have been rebuilt, including the Château St. Louis with its splendid antique-furnished Governor's Wing.

At the opening, the Minister announced that an additional \$3.2 million has been earmarked for Canada's major historic park. Work will continue into the mid-1970s.



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Research Partners



This issue features two complementary facets of National Historic Sites Service work — historical and archaeological research.

Completion of the Château St. Louis at the Fortress of Louisbourg in Nova Scotia culminates six years of archaeological excavation backed by painstaking historical research in the archives of France, England, the United States and Canada. Project engineers based their reconstruction drawings both on evidence unearthed at the site, and original building plans. Interestingly enough, the unearthed foundations have sometimes contradicted the 18th-century blueprints, showing that on-the-spot modifications were made by the French engineers.

Although most of the original fortress-town was demolished in the 18th century,

leaving modern archaeologists a field of rubble, the site has yielded over a million artifacts to date, ranging from tableware to toys.

In general, however, the best sources of well-preserved archaeological artifacts are underwater sites. A sunken ship provides a supply of closely dated material of known cultural origin. But, as diver-archaeologist Robert Grenier points out, "You can't just pick up trowel and shovel. The underwater archaeologist has to make his own equipment suited to the particular site and depth of the water."

He cites last summer's work at Restigouche as an example — it took a month for the archaeologists to build suitable equipment.

1 An 18th-century engraving shows the supply ship *Bienfaisant* in action at Louisbourg. Two years later it was sunk at Restigouche.

2 A diver-archaeologist sketches the hull wreckage of the *Iris des Machault*, sunk in the 1760 Battle of the Restigouche.



1 Timber remains of the original drawbridge over the ditch to the Château St. Louis are examined and their dimensions recorded.

2 Summer, 1969. Approach to the reconstruction site from Louisbourg harbour with Gabarus Bay and the Atlantic on the far side.

3 September, 1969. Exterior of the Governor's Wing of the Château St. Louis.

4 Modern methods and materials are used, but dimensions of the original fortress are scrupulously followed.

5 The grey-panelled private sitting-room where the last Governor of Louisbourg, Du Quesnel, gambled away his personal fortune.

6 Grand staircase leading to the Governor's chambers on the second floor of the Governor's Wing.

7 Under an 18th-century gilt and crystal chandelier, the table is set for an intimate meal in the Governor's salon.



Restigouche

A shipwreck, it has been said, is a time capsule. Within the sunken ship's hull are the pots and dishes, guns and coins of a particular period of history. And since underwater sites, unlike those on land, remain relatively undisturbed, artifacts can be precisely dated and their country of origin determined.

The first task of the archaeologist is to pinpoint the location of the underwater site. The most common method of locating sunken ships is to have divers swim along the bottom looking for traces of wrecks, but this is time-consuming, expensive, and is not feasible in muddy and polluted waters.

Another method is a magnetometer survey taken from a boat or airplane. (The magnetometer is an instrument which indicates the presence of magnetic materials.) However, the relatively small amount of iron in a wooden vessel is not likely to register at all in air surveys, or with accuracy from a bobbing boat.

At the suggestion of A. E. Wilton, supervisor of technical services for the Historic Sites Service, a less conventional magnetometer survey was carried out last February in New Brunswick. At the site of the 17-day Battle of the Restigouche, the last naval encounter between British and French for possession of colonial Canada, the instruments were pulled behind a snowmobile across the icy cover of the Restigouche River opposite Campbellton. The location of magnetic materials regis-

The purpose of this long-term archaeological exploration project, says Zacharchuk, is to get more definite data on a lot of understudied French material found in land sites. For example, the Research Division of the Service is currently studying Acadian ceramic types so a selection of well-dated ceramics would prove especially helpful.

The Restigouche site has yielded many artifacts in unexpectedly good condition. Sturdy crockery, delicate stoneware, cutlery, buttons and ammunition were cleaned and numbered at the site then shipped to the Service's Ottawa artifact laboratory for treatment, mending, analysis and cataloguing. Once treatment and study are complete, the artifacts will be displayed at appropriate National Historic Parks.

Two finds which especially delighted the Restigouche archaeologists were a shipment of new boots, preserved in factory condition by the mud of the riverbed, and a silver shoe buckle bearing the name of its manufacturer—Achar, and place of origin—Paris.

The Historic Sites team will return next summer for at least one more season to complete recovery work from the Machault. They hope to retrieve additional cargo from the ship's hull and to record the ship's architectural features. Of the other two ships sunk in the battle, Zacharchuk points out that the hull of the supply ship Bienfaisant, battered by river ice, has been laid bare of artifacts, but the ship's structural

Fur Trade Post Survey

Hopping from commercial plane to car to bush plane to motorboat, two researchers from the National Historic Sites Service set out last summer on a 10,000-mile, five-week tour of once important empires—the Canadian fur-trading systems. The survey look Terry Smythe, historian, and Jim Chism, archaeologist, from Fort William on the northeast shore of Lake Superior, to Reliance on Atitlan Lake—1,500 miles to the north.

Chism points to the popular image of the fur trade as one of French voyageurs handing over trinkets to the Indians in exchange for bales of luxurious furs in a forest clearing. Few are aware of the complex trading-post system that 200 years ago stretched 3,000 miles along waterways from Montreal to the fur-rich Lake Athabasca district in the Northwest Territories.

Time and distance were two of the traders' adversaries. Trade goods had to be brought from Montreal or York Factory on Hudson Bay to the uppermost posts, and furs taken back to the metropolis or the Bay for export to Europe. Moreover, the northern rivers were free of ice for only five months of the year, and lully laden canoes could take as long as four months to travel one way.

The solution was the establishment of a depot system, breaking the supply lines into short stages which could be managed in the time available. Each of the posts in the chain became a base of operations for penetration further west. The network in-

cluded main depots (clearing houses between the interior and eastern markets); district trading posts; provision depots and posts; portage posts and wintering posts (the basic trading units located near the Indians' hunting grounds).

Smythe and Chism visited some 40 post sites along the rivers between Lake Superior and Yellowknife. Their task was to decide where archaeological "digs" would yield the information necessary for development of posts of national historic importance.

The fur trade sites have proved especially vulnerable to the ravages of time, nature and man. Wooden buildings have deteriorated or have been hauled off for firewood; sites themselves leveled for roads or dams; layers of artifact-rich soil riddled by prairie dogs or amateur treasure hunters.

Except where a post is still in operation or has been shut down recently, no standing structures remain. Most abandoned trading posts are little more than depressions indicating the cellar pit of a building, and loose mounds of clay and stone where fireplace and chimney once stood.

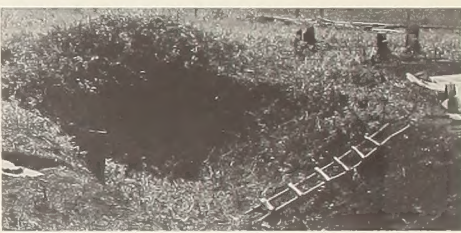
What, then, can researchers learn from the remains? Chism stresses that there is more to archaeology than digging up and dating the "goodies": From careful excavation of a particular post site they would hope to discover how the inhabitants got along with their Indian neighbours and rival fur traders. Were the buildings in a defensive pattern? Were they surrounded

by a palisade or walls? What types of goods were traded in a particular district at a particular time? Was the post a permanent one? How many people did it support?

In the northwest interior, the Hudson's Bay and Northwest Companies' activity accelerated from peaceful rivalry in the late 1700s to violence in the early 1800s. The Athabasca region was the Eldorado of the fur trade, and by the early 1820s competing posts became virtual forts—rival traders were captured and canoe brigades ambushed. Eighteenth century annals of the trade tell of daring escapes and cloak-and-dagger activity befitting a modern spy thriller.

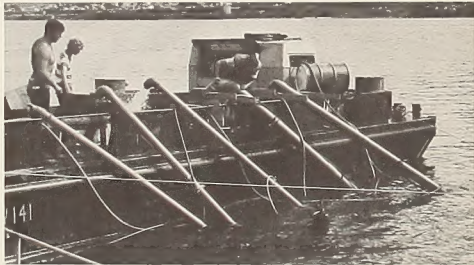
Then there is the "other half of the fur trade", says Chism: "To date archaeology in Canada has delved mainly into pre-history. This is all right, we have to know the pattern of life before the white man came in. But how was the native's life changed by the arrival of the white fur trader? The Indian once subsisted on hunting and fishing. He went out in family units in pursuit of his food. How was his pattern of existence changed when all he needed could be had at the fur trading post? What happened when the clay pot was replaced by the kettle, and the arrow by the gun?"

Ultimately the answers given in historical journals will have to be supplemented by those yielded by the ground. The Historic Sites Service preliminary survey work will continue next summer.



1 A silver buckle, approximately 1 1/2" by 1 1/4", was retrieved through the air-lift.

2 From a small auxiliary barge anchored at right angles to the main barge which served as the divers' "home base", an air-lift of five plastic pipes carries artifact-bearing material from the riverbed to numbered screening baskets. The sunken ship's hull was guided into 16-foot squares, each assigned a number to which the baskets correspond.

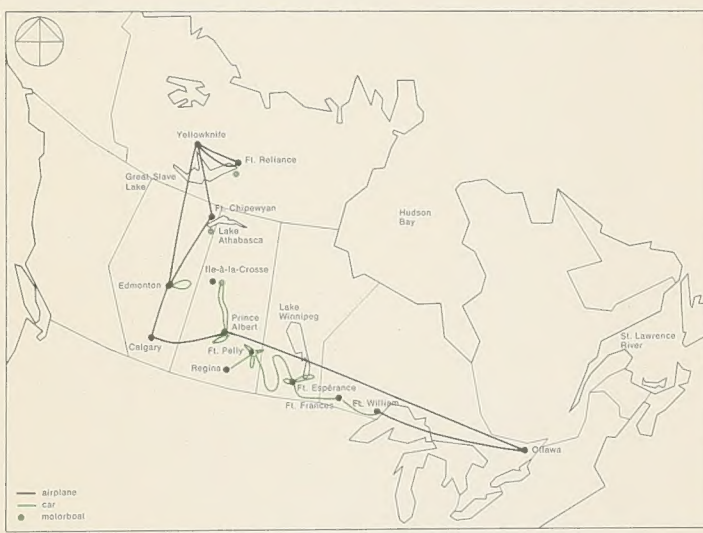
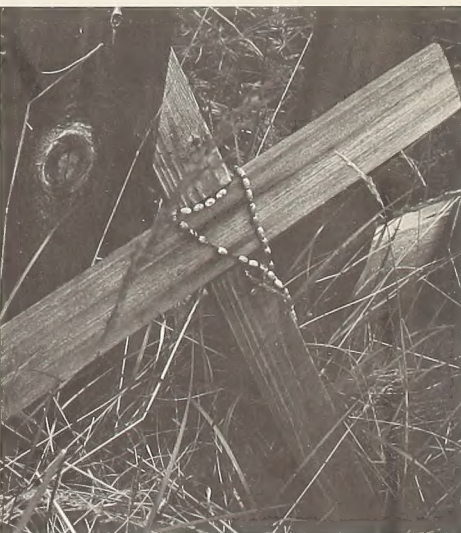


1 Wooden cross and rosary beads behind the Reliance site mark the grave of an Indian villager from across the river.

2 Group of three uniquely preserved brick and mud fireplaces once used for heating and cooking at Fort Reliance.

3 Cellar pits of Fort White Earth, now an Alberta Historic Site on the North Saskatchewan River northeast of Edmonton. A provision and trading post, it was operated by Hudson's Bay and Northwest Companies within a single palisade (thick buildings separated by a fence) from 1810-13—a time of intense trade rivalry.

4 Map showing the five-week survey consisting of two excursions from Ottawa, the first ending at Regina, the second at Reliance.



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tered by the magnetometer in the survey area was confirmed by divers in the spring. Under the direction of Walter Zacharchuk, supervisor of underwater research, and his assistant, Robert Grenier, ship's timbers, ribs, cannon, and a 9,000-pound anchor measuring 8 1/2 feet across led to tentative identification of the Bienfaisant, the Machault, and the Marquis de Malauze, three major ships sunk in the 1760 engagement.

Recovery work began in July on the warship Machault, largest of the French trio which slipped to the riverbed 208 years ago. In that fatal engagement, the Machault, its gunpowder supply exhausted, had been put to the torch and abandoned by the French to block the river channel off Mission Point, New Brunswick.

features may be of interest. Part of the hull of the other supply ship, the Marquis de Malauze, was salvaged and rebuilt in 1939 by the Capuchin Fathers of St. Ann's Mission at Cross Point.

Since plunging into underwater archaeology in 1964, the National Historic Sites Service has conducted surveys in the Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, and Gannanque areas. In 1967 a British gunboat, unique in architecture and construction, was recovered from the Brown's Bay area near Mallorytown, Ontario. The vessel's design and early naval records point to a building date around 1812. The only preserved gunboat of its kind, it is currently on display at St. Lawrence Islands National Park, Ontario.